

Medicine Bow Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVA)

Meeting Minutes

Cooperating Agency Meeting
December 20, 2017; 10:00 am – 3:30 pm
In person or VTC

In Attendance:

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Aaron Voos | Frank Romero | Melissa Martin |
| Beth Callaway | Jessica Crowder | Michael Salazar |
| Bret Callaway | Josh Peck | Russ Bacon |
| Carolyn Upton | Justin Williams | Sandy Underhill |
| Carson Engelskirger | Leanne Correll | Sarah Hutchins |
| Casey Whitman | Lisa Solberg-Schwab | Seth Kuchenbecker |
| Corey Class | Liz D'Arcy | Tony Hoch |
| Dena Egenhoff | Mark Conrad | |

Action Items:

- Comments on the Design Criteria, Implementation Checklists, and Best Estimate of Proposed Action document are due on January 9th so they can be reviewed during our January 10th IDT meeting. Use of 'track changes' and 'comments' in the Design Criteria document would be most appreciated. We are looking for identification of things that don't make sense, that need additional clarification, are perceived omissions, etc.

Agenda Topics:

1. Proposed Action – Modifications and Refinements

DISCUSSION

- The group discussed the changes made to the Treatment Opportunity Area (TOA) Categories and the TOA map.
 - There are now 5 TOA categories on the map; they are based on management directives per the Forest Plan. The total acreage is the same but the distribution is different. This also has not changed the 600 mile number for temporary roads.
 - The development of these new TOA categories show responsiveness to public comments made during scoping. The refining of areas show that we will focus our tools in our "toolbox" where they are allowed.
 - The group decided that the way the TOAs are labeled could be improved. The TOA subcategories should be rebranded to make their purpose more clear. The new name should mean something tangible.
 - For presentation purposes, show what the landscape could look like after treatments are implemented in each TOA type.

- The design criteria/analysis assumptions released to the cooperators is a work in progress and is not yet to be distributed to the public. The Forest Service is looking for comments and suggestions from the cooperators before it is finalized.
 - The design criteria shows out intent to protect the resources.
 - The intention of the Forest Service is looking to more closely work with industry and agency partners. Therefore, cooperator comments on design criteria are important. All comments should be submitted to Melissa Martin by January 9th.
- The implementation checklist is intended to bring accountability and show a commitment to protect our resources.
 - The document is interactive and filled with dropdown boxes. It is designed to be streamlined, meaning it will only select relevant design criteria related to the specific project.
 - More changes were suggested during this portion of the meeting. First, a list of acronyms should be provided with the document. In the project description we can note enhancements to resources from treatment. Lastly, the term “accounting unit” could be changed. Landscape area was one suggested name.
- Best Estimate of Proposed Actions (BEPA) was derived from canopy and fuel data. It is our best estimate and may not reflect what will actually happen. It is a decision tool but it is not binding.
 - The group would like to see this depicted in a different color scheme. There was also concern with the term “purposed action” as the public may misinterpret this.
 - BEPA will always overestimate acreage.
 - We are still waiting on watershed information and must determine a threshold level.

CONCLUSION

The group discussed the most up-to-date TOAs, Design Criteria, Implementation Checklist, and BEPA documents. The TOAs were updated to show 5 categories based on Forest Plan direction. The design criteria provide NEPA documentation demonstrating that we intend to protect resources while managing for multiple resources. The implementation checklist is an interactive document to bring more accountability to the project. BEPA provides us with another tool to aid in our project decisions. All relevant documents discussed were shared via email. Comments on these are due January 9th.

2. Additional Public Engagement

DISCUSSION

- The additional public engagement is not a re-scoping period but instead a check in. Rather than having a traditional NEPA style meeting, we are planning format the meetings in an office hour’s format. Meaning, we will schedule 3 hour block of time in which the public can come in to the office and learn more about the project. We hope to continue this check in style meetings with the public through the life of the project.
 - The group decided to have these first check in meetings in Saratoga on the 23rd and 24th; and Laramie on the 30th and 31st.

- It was agreed that it would be most beneficial if member of the Forest Service and cooperating agencies attended these meetings. A doodle pole will be shared so that the cooperating agency members can show up for blocks of time. We hope to have a balanced representation of resource groups at the meeting.
- During the January check in meetings we want to share the updates to the project. It is important to show the public that we heard the concerns they voiced during the scoping period. Additionally, we will be addressing the miss information that has been shared about the project.
 - We want to announce the meetings two weeks before hand. It was suggested that we include a short document with the release so that people have a better understanding of the project before they decide to attend the meeting. The meeting will be announced on our website and cooperating agencies media pages. Additionally, with help from the partners, we want to reach out to clubs, papers, and radio stations.
 - Sharing points:
 - A fact sheet
 - What the project is not
 - Visuals (e.g. maps, treatments, clear-cuts, managed vs. unmanaged forests, current conditions)
 - Condition based NEPA vs traditional NEPA, differences and similarities
 - Check-ins throughout the project
 - Summarization of what we heard from scoping before
 - TOAs
 - Checklist
 - BEPA
 - Timeline
- The group also brainstormed other public engagement strategies in addition to these check in meetings. Some ideas included contacting the public radio to run a story, sending out news bulletins, speaking directly with community leaders, posting surveys, broadcasting meetings live, and developing an interactive map.

CONCLUSION

We will be having our first office hour style check-in meetings on the 23rd and 24th in Saratoga; and Laramie on the 30th and 31st. A Doodle Poll will be sent out so that cooperators can sign up for time slots. At the meeting we hope to clear up misinformation and share the project progress. The group also brainstormed other public engagement strategies that would benefit agencies and the public.

3. Project Timeline and Cooperating Agency Meeting Schedule

DISCUSSION

- A timeline was shared via email prior to this cooperating agency meeting. It was reviewed as a group.

- It was decided that we will continue with the monthly meeting schedule. It is important to maintain our relationships between the agencies. However, we need to be conscious of the time it takes to prepare for these meetings and ensure we continue working as a team in this project.
 - **It was decided that it would be helpful to start the meetings earlier in the morning.**

CONCLUSION

The groups reviewed the project timeline. It was agreed that we would continue with our regularly scheduled cooperating agency meetings.

Meeting adjourned.